Volume 4, Issue 50   Atari Online News, Etc.   December 13, 2002

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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
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It's been one of those weeks where you just can't wait until it's over. The
problem is that I know that next week is not going to be any better! I
won't go into details, but it's all work-related - things will get more
hectic before they get more calm! I can't wait to go on vacation after the
holiday!

The weather here lately has been dismal, to say the least. No major storms
to speak of - just damp and gray. A little snow, a little rain. Not too
cold, but certainly no sun-bathing temperatures either! And winter isn't
even here yet, officially.

The holiday season is upon us in full swing. We have most of our shopping
down for a change. We just have a few things to pick up, and of course we
have some items to get for ourselves. Typically we'd be frantic at about
this time of the shopping season, but not this year. We may even manage to
eliminate our last-minute excursions this year! I hope your experiences are
similar! Desk update, for anyone who cares - it's on the road!

Until next time...

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                Atari ST Quick FAQ Looking for New Maintainer

Martin-Eric Racine writes:

In April 2001, Nicolas Bales handed me the legacy of his great Atari ST
Quick FAQ, and I became its maintainer. Recently, I noticed that I never
gotten around updating the Quick FAQ, even though I've accumulated a LOT
of new material for it. The truth is, nowadays, I'm perfectly happy
using Linux and Mac for everything (except to compose music, which is
why I kept my Stacy and TT030). Therefore, my motivation for updating
the Atari ST Quick FAQ is essentially nil, at this point.

So, I'm willing to hand over the Atari ST Quick FAQ to someone who is still actively using their Atari ST/TT/Falcon and who has kept up with whatever new developments that happened during the last 2 years. People who are interested can visit my homepage and drop me a short e-mail, explaining why they wanna become the maintainer of this venerable document. My main selection criteria are:

1) Still actively using Atari ST/TT/Falcon computers.

2) Great Web site design abilities that keep CAB users in mind.

3) Has access to host the Quick FAQ on http://www.atari.org/ or some similar community site that will not disappear any time soon – to avoid the Quick FAQ constantly changing URL.

In closing, I would like to thank Nicolas Bales for his great work on the first version of the Quick FAQ and for entrusting me with it, as well as other users who have sent me new material for the FAQ that I never got around uploading – I promise you that I'll give the whole lot to whoever becomes the new maintainer, so that it eventually makes it to the document.

I'll announce the name of the lucky fellow, sometimes in January.

http://www.pp.fishpool.fi/~q-funk/ST/

KlaxWorld.com Site Launch

Hello Fellow Atarians,

I am happy to announce the recent launch of our new web site, KlaxWorld.com!

KlaxWorld features all sorts of information and other goodies related to that classic Atari puzzle game Klax. Long a favorite of many video game fans, there is now a central location you can go to for all your Klax needs, and it is US!

Featuring Klax history, slang, strategy, soundtracks, game versions, clones, trivia, programmer info, knick-knacks, and MORE, KlaxWorld truly has something for every diehard Klax fan and novice alike. You can even "Ask the Klax Brat" about any Klax-related question, submit your own "Klax to the Max" pics and videos of you and your high score, and purchase "Klax Snacks"!

You might also be interested in knowing that respectful homage is paid to Atari's engineers and its excellent Lynx handheld unit. There is also some interesting Atari trivia among our "Klax Facts".

KlaxWorld was recently featured in the headlines of AtariAge.com, and we would like your help too in spreading the word. Link to us, tell your friends and visitors about us, and just plain visit us.

Some might think KlaxWorld a little over the top, but what are games for if not to go crazy and have a little good, clean fun once in a while?

KlaxWorld.com, experience the obsession!

   -Anthony Bufort
    ajbufort@klaxworld.com

    KlaxWorld.com

                    New Emulator Atari 8-bit EMUAPC

Hi

www.komires.com Official page of the EMUAPC new polish Atari 8-bit
emulator. You find on this page info and download beta version
EMUAPC090Beta. (Sorry but page is only Polish now).

Best Regards
Miros‡aw Kozio‡
http://epieniadze.onet.pl/mbank

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                      PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                    compiled by Joe Mirando
                      joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. It's been an interesting week here in my
neighborhood. A storm, power outage, and utility maintenance kept things
jumping.

Mother Nature, along with the local road crews, have thrown a few
curveballs, and I get the feeling that Mother Nature, at least, isn't
through yet.

Things have of course been slow on the Atari scene, but slow is not
necessarily stagnant. There are some new and interesting things in the
works, and that kind of amazes me. I mean, Atari hasn't made a computer
in years and yet there are still users and developers who stick with it.
And that, in my mind, is what makes our chosen platform special.

Sure, Amiga still has a strong following, and even the old TI-994A and
the Coleco Adam have users who just won't give 'em up, but the Atari
platform has always seemed different. I can't speak for all users of
other "classic" platforms, but most of the ones I've met up with were
more interested in bashing someone else's choice than just enjoying their
own choice.

Yes, there are those among us Atari users that take great joy in bashing
someone else's choice, but there seem to be fewer of them. Heck, I enjoy
bashing Bill Gates and Microsoft as much as anyone else. But it's not as

important to me as simply being secure in my appreciation of my chosen
"classic" platform. What's more important to me than anything else is the
ability to choose. I've made a lot of computer related "non-standard"
choices. From my esteemed Atari 1040 to Linux on a PC and, yes, even
Apple's OS X, I like the idea of having a choice. The way I see it,
computers should provide us with more choices, not less.

If Microsoft's offerings do what you want or need them to do, then by all
means make use of it. If Linux gives you the flexibility and price-point
that you want, then use that. If BeOS, BSD, or whatever else is out there
"does it" for you, then by all means use it and enjoy it. Just make sure
that you allow others to do the same.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info available from
the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Brad H asks for help with booting his hard drive:

"I'm new to Atari equipment and was wondering if there is a way to boot an
Atari 520ST with a hard drive connected, but not actually boot off of the
hard drive? I got the hard drive for free and when the atari tries to
boot from it, it gets to a certain point, and then resets and tries to
boot from there again. I'm wondering if there's a way to boot the Atari
using something else to get in and see if there is anything salvageable
on the drive."

Edward Baiz offers a pointer or two:

"What software do you use to boot the hard drive? You should have
HDDriver. I would just boot up the ST, then turn on the drive. Run
the HDDriver boot program, then install the hard drive icon. Click
on that icon and it should bring up what is on the drive."

Lonny Purcell adds:

"Try holding down the Alternate key until the desktop appears.
You might have to try a few times until you get the timing right.
Meaning at what point you press and hold the key down.

It might help having a blank formatted disk in drive A: to avoid any
delays while it looks for a disk."

Peter Slegg posts this about networking and such:

"I've been having fun getting up and running on BT Broadband.
I bought an ADSL modem a D-Link DSL-300G+ and waited patiently
for my phone line to be converted to ADSL. It only took about
a week but I had to wait a further 2 days for my isp to supply
my static ip address.

It was then that I found some info hidden deep in the modem
documentation. This ADSL modem uses DHCP so even though I have
a static ip address I think am going to need a router device
to connect to the modem unless someone knows anything about
a DHCP client for Atari ?

I haven't managed to configure the modem. The manual says a

javascript browser is needed but Draconis doesn't like the
script on the modems web-page. I suspect it need Java too.

I also discovered that BT Broadband uses PPP over ATM and
not PPP over Ethernet that is common on cable networks.
If am going to need a router then apparently it needs to
be able do PPPoA as well otherwise it doesn't work with
the modem. Does anyone know of such a router at reasonable
price?"

David Wade tells Peter:

"I can't find an DHCP client for the Atari. I use a router with NAT and
just reserve and address for the ATARI.

Note that its not always obvious if and how you can reserve static
addresses in ADSL routers so it may be worth asking the supplier if it
will do what you want before you buy.

I suspect many of the routers will need this type of browser. Also Not
sure what type of Atari you have but my TT with CAB and the Lyndon
Etherenet is not fast enough to take real advantage of broadband. Its
just too slow at rendering JPEG files etc. I would look at a cheap PC
running Linux if you want to avoid MS.

There are a number of such routers. I use the Alcatel but its not cheap.
For cheaper options see the Solwise range, but again these may need a PC
to configure."

Kenneth Medin adds:

"Note that you really don't have to reserve any static ip addresses, just
avoid using them on any other computer on the network. I have been using
a Netgear RT314 "Broadband router" or NAT-box for a couple of years now
with a couple of pc's and Ataris with DHCP enabled and it works fine. To
be sure the ip will not be used on any other computer choose a higher
like 192.168.0.129 or so. Often the DHCP server will start from
192.168.0.2 so from 192.168.0.6 and upwards will be OK if you have four
pc's.

My RT314 is fully configurable from Atari via Telnet. This is also a much
faster way compared to using a browser.

Partly agreed! I use my Atari TT for all news and mail (virus free!) and
also lots of surfing by clicking on url's in mail/news posts. As there is
no extra "online fee" I can wait while CAB renders the pages.

On the other hand a 500 Mhz pc is really much better and more compatible
for lots of web pages. With the Microsoft dominance you simply must have
at least IE 5.5 sp2 or you will be locked out of lots of things. And it's
of course OK to use MS products as long as you don't pay anything for
them :-)

The Lyndon EtherNEC actually can fill my 500 kbit/sec connection simply
by downloading files with CAB on a TT.

Everything runs considerably faster with EtherNEC compared to 153600 bps
null modem that I used on this TT before.

My provider simply uses "bridged Ethernet" where the user must obtain an

ip address via DHCP and then manually "logon" on a Javascript webpage. As
long as you renew the ip address you will stay "logged in". This means I
can keep my pc off and only have to power it up if my link has gone down
for some reason. The RT314 takes care of the ip address renewals.

May I suggest that you by a separate NAT-box (broadband router) with
built in switch and four tp connections. If you buy a combined ADSL
modem/router you may get into trouble when the ADSL technology gets
obsolete. And no USB!!! this goes for both Atari and pc use!!"

Charles Stanley posts this about keyboard repair:

"I remember seeing pleas for help about failing keys, especially the
Control key on the TT, over the past years, but could not recall the
published solution.

In case the problem arises again (Atari Info Sites please copy), I have
just found my print-out of instructions. They were by Mario Becroft and
were downloaded, with a comment, from *Funkyware.Org*, July 1997.

Mario's site was http:/www.pl.net/user/mario/ or mailto: mb@tos.pl.net.

I followed his instructions and succeeded in repairing the mylar."

John Garone asks about coding html on his Atari:

"I'm having fun using JOE to build some web pages (great program).
So far, so good with the very (VERY) basics. In my travels around HTML
code sites I see login scripts (username/password) that need a program at
the ISP (ex. Perl) for it to function. Is there a script/program that will
function within a website and independent of an ISP ?
Note: Must run on an Atari."

Chris Simon tells John:

"Erm, no! This sort of thing can only be done with server-side scripting
/CGI (dependant on your ISP - although if you use a standard method then
it will be portable across ISPs as long as they support that method), or
client-side scripting where there is no Atari support.

I don't think cookies can be created without some sort of scripting?"

John replies:

"Do FTP logins work similarly? I had a site built that had a lot of
files with vt and hta and I seem to remember a password in there
somewhere /:). I made some changes to the site using JOE and transferred
it all over to another ISP via FTP. It's running the same without the vt
and hta files so it seems they were'nt being used and made no difference
regarding logging into FTP."

Chris adds:

"FTP logins are different. You have an account on the server (for the
sake of argument, let's say it's Unix) and can log into the server as
though you were logging in at a terminal - that's telnet really but it's
the same principle for FTP.

When you log into the server using FTP, you are using your own account
name and password and you have total privileges in your own directory. On

a Unix server, you could then 'chmod', or change the privileges on
various directories, to make them secure via HTTP (a web browser) -
that's how you make a directory secure as detailed in my second response.

I'm not familiar with vt and hta files, although I know that hta access is
certainly a method of restricting access to HTTP calls. I think it's
specific to the Apache web server software??

When a user requests page via HTTP (a browser), he gets assigned an
anonymous username. By restricting access via one of these methods, he
is required to authenticate with a valid username and password.

Or you can program usernames and passwords via server-side or client-side
scripting as I've mentioned before. In that situation, you are in charge
of a username database yourself - you have to program into your pages a
username/password lookup and then allow the page to be delivered to the
browser.

I think that's it in a nutshell!

BTW I have done some secured websites in work. If you try
http://admint.bangor.ac.uk/cardenq/ then you should be prompted for a
username and password by your browser (I'm not telling you what a valid
username would be!). Here, I'm using directory permissions on a Windows
NT server, where that directory can only be accessed by a certain user
group that I've set up in the operating system.

A different method was used by this site -
http://admint.bangor.ac.uk/recruit/. This time, you get the first page
but have to enter a username and password into a HTML form. When it's
sent to the server via CGI, it is authenticated against a database that
I've programmed."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - BMX Game XXXcels in Being Lewd!
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   'Hit Man 2'! Game Maker Alliances?
                                   2600 Game Reviews! Rose Bowl Sponsor!
                                   And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Acclaim Entertainment's new $50 bike-riding simulation "BMX XXX" is so crass, juvenile and pornographic, it's as if the developers wanted to see just how far they could go and still sell it as a mass-market game.

Here's a product whose creators take pride in having developed one of the few "adult" games on the market. It rewards players with 30-second videos of gyrating strippers and allows them to create their own topless bike riders. It's laced with obscenities.

On one level, BMX XXX is destined to be a laughable illustration of the ridiculous amount of effort some males are willing to undertake just to see a bit of flesh. It's a psychology thesis waiting to be written.

But the reality is the game's "Mature" rating will do little to keep it out of the hands of children. And that's no laughing matter.

Indeed, this is one game where the rating needs to be taken seriously. The slogan for the game is "Keep it dirty," and it delivers on its promise.

Thus, some retailers are refusing to carry the game, whose rating makes it inappropriate for anyone younger than 17.

The brouhaha also forced Acclaim to remove the nudity from the PlayStation 2 version which, in turn, has alienated some older PS-2 owners who might not mind watching a strip tease or two. The nudity remains on the Xbox version and for the GameCube product, even though many players regard GameCube as a system for children.

The game wasn't always meant to be this extreme. The product was originally going to be "Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 3." It was renamed "Dave Mirra BMX XXX" earlier this year with the promise that it would be designed for players "who demand more adult-oriented content;" at the time there was no reference to nudity. Mirra, one of the world's top BMX stunt riders, is no longer associated with the game.

Acclaim tried to head off the criticism in October, releasing a statement complaining that the game was "being held to an entirely different standard than other entertainment media with comparable content, including movies, television and radio."

That's a stretch. The gratuitous nudity in "BMX XXX" is typically reserved for adult videos. And, I've never heard the "BMX XXX"-level of profanity on any radio or television program, and almost never in a film. In fact, the profanity is probably the most offensive part of this game, with characters who spew so many obscene words they make Jerry Springer's guests seem absolutely erudite.

In fact, I've never seen a game try so hard to be offensive.

Consider what happens to you in one of the early missions. You get an assignment from a groundskeeper who announces, using crude language, that he's sick and tired of cleaning up the dog detritus. He wants you to go across town and fetch the poodle of the local pimp, performing enough bike stunts on the way back to rack up 20,000 points.

After you grab the poodle away from the foul-mouthed pimp, you have about 50 seconds to earn the 20,000 points and return to the groundskeeper.

If you are successful, the reward is... well, not worth mentioning in polite company.

It's for sure, you won't find many experiences like this in other computer games. But who would want to? The sophomoric attempts at humor quickly wear thin as you try for the 10th time to complete the same mission.

In a perfect world, none of this nudity, profanity and tastelessness would matter because the "Mature" rating would keep this game out of the hands of children.

But in the real world, kids are a big market for these games because teens and pre-teens want to be able to do "adult" things, and buying a game like this makes them feel grown up.

Unfortunately, there's no penalty imposed against a store that sells an "M"-rated game to a 13-year-old and too many clueless parents don't pay attention to the ratings.

In this case, they should.

After all, if kids help make "BMX XXX" is a big hit, could a "BMX XXX II" with completely nude strippers and simulated sex acts be far behind?

Be An Assassin With "Hit Man 2"

Life is full of choices. Make the wrong one, and it could prove costly. That's especially true with "Hitman 2: Silent Assassin."

Make the wrong choice in this new game for PC, Xbox and PlayStation 2, and you'll die. Quickly. Over and over again.

Early on, it's about all I managed to do.

You play a genetically enhanced bald guy (codename Mr. 47, although Mr. Clean would seem more appropriate) with a murderous past he's trying to forget by living as a fix-it guy in a Sicilian monastery.

Of course, that gig doesn't last long, and soon you're back to your old assassin ways. Blame it on the altered genes, or perhaps it's the mysterious barcode stamped on the back of your head.

So it's back to the assassin lifestyle, which according to developer Ion Interactive, consists of four goals: sneak up on the bad guys, strangle/shoot/stab them, steal their clothes for disguise, then drag their bodies into a dark corner so nobody notices.

If only it were that simple.

Even on the easy setting, I usually raised the suspicion of my foes. A small box in the corner of the screen fluctuates from empty to black to red, depending on the suspicion level of nearby enemies. A sure way to die is to run, brandish a weapon or appear out of disguise.

After hours of restarting, I finally managed to pull off an assassination without anybody else noticing, and I guess it was a kind of sick thrill.

But there should be a better reward for being patient.

I also feel "Hitman 2" is a bit pedantic, what with all the crouching, slinking and tiptoeing around.

The graphics were spectacular, replete with letterbox movies between missions that'll take you to Russia, Indian, Japan and Malaysia.

During missions, the artists did a great job of getting textures right: wooden doors are grooved and varnished, and it's amazing to watch reflections dance from the depths of a swimming pool.

Sonically, "Hit Man 2" really shines. At the very least it deserves some sort of award for best computer rendition of the sound of snow crunching underfoot. Along with the score, played by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra and Choir, there are many aural moments, like the sound of water roiling and sloshing around you in a Russian sewer system.

While the game has its thrills, and the sound and graphics certainly impress, a big problem remains. The credo of all good assassins, lurking in the shadows, not stepping on fallen branches, and generally elusive on-the-job mannerisms   don't mean a thing in "Hit Man 2."

You can romp around with machine guns blazing and you're just as likely to succeed. In fact, I had got farther in the game shooting everything that moves than I did slinking around.

And even if you decide to do it like a real assassin, the realism only goes so far.

Magically, you can carry enough weaponry and ammo to stock a munitions depot, all under your coat.

Then there's the all-seeing map, which you can view at any point in a level. It removes any uncertainty (and all suspense), providing floor plans and realtime movements of all enemies. Not even James Bond has gadgets this unfair.

I had sluggish performance the first time I ran "Hit Man 2" on my 1.5 gigahertz PC, but after downloading the latest drivers for my video card it ran smoothly with all the graphics settings maxed.

Video Games Makers Gear Up for Alliances

Rising development costs and shaky finances may speed up alliances in Europe's video game industry after the watershed Christmas sales season and a key merger in Japan, analysts say.

France's Infogrames, Ubi Soft and Titus Interactive, and Britain's Eidos are all seen as potential prey for cash-rich predators, but analysts have mixed views on when and how the cards will be reshuffled.

Last month Japanese game software makers Enix Corp and Square Co. Ltd. announced plans to merge, unleashing speculation more deals were in the offing.

"The merger between Square and Enix bears out our view that there is still

scope for industry consolidation," said ING analyst Bruno Hareng.

Small-scale merger activity has already been occurring in the United States and in Europe, where firms have secured creative skills and market share by buying small developers and studios that were struggling to stay afloat.

Analysts say this will continue. They also believe large-scale deals will take place but are less sure about when.

"Buying of small development studios will continue, but I do not expect large-size deals in the short-term," said Schroder Salomon Smith Barney analyst Sebastien Lalevee.

Consolidation is inevitable because securing a blockbuster game is key to survival and costs tied to developing games for new consoles are high, analysts say.

Size also matters when it comes to securing an international distribution network or snapping up key franchises.

"There is a size premium in the industry. You need to be in a strong position to negotiate with clients, suppliers and movie studios," said SG Cowen analyst Jean-Patrick Mousset.

U.S. and Japanese giants are on the prowl.

Microsoft can easily fund the acquisitions it needs among small studios and developers with some of the more popular games on its XBox console. In September it bought British video game developer Rare Ltd and is expected to clinch other deals.

Japan's Sega, which transformed itself last year into a game maker after ditching its console business, wants to acquire small development studios in Europe and the United States, though analysts say its weak performance could limit its expansion.

Predators may also lurk among U.S. games publishers, analysts say. Electronic Arts, the largest independent video games publisher, and Activision Inc, the second largest, have the means to shop in Europe.

"If the Americans start buying in Europe, it's likely to be a second-tier company that needs to get bigger like Activision, Take 2 or THQ. Electronic Arts does not really need to grow that way," said Mousset.

The outlook on potential deals could clear after Christmas, which will leave some firms more vulnerable and rescue others.

"All these firms are jockeying for position. After Christmas, once the dust settles, we will know who is better placed," said Tony Scott from market researchers Informa. He expects the real action to begin in the second half of 2003.

Games publishers make 40 to 50 percent of their annual sales in the last quarter of the year. For the first time this Christmas, all the new-generation consoles are available in Europe, which means competition will be tougher than ever.

"European games publishers will try to sell themselves when they are in good shape -- that is after Christmas 2002. I expect some deals between

March 2003 and December 2003," said SG Cowen's Mousset.

ING's Hareng agreed. "A buyer must position himself during the industry cycle that will end in 2005. If there is a consolidation, it will be on a 12-month horizon," he said.

Other analysts see no real action before 2004, when they expect the sector cycle to peak. "In 2003 companies will try to benefit from a strong market, except those that are really in trouble," said E.T.C analyst Xavier Courtois.

European games makers, whose valuations have plunged after the recent industry slump, make attractive targets. Infogrames has lost 70 percent of its value this year and smaller peer Ubi Soft some 60 percent.

Analysts say loss-making Titus Interactive is in a tough spot. New evidence of its difficulties emerged last week when it called a December 24 shareholders meeting to get authorisation to extend a deadline for redeeming its 2005 convertible bonds and to suspend payment on their coupons for three years.

Eidos, maker of cyber heroine Lara Croft, has sound finances and can continue to operate as an independent publisher, but with a float of 97 percent, it could be vulnerable.

"I thought Eidos would be sold before the launch of Tomb Raider, and that launch has been postponed to next year. My guess is that something could happen soon," one sector analyst said.

Europe's largest video games maker Infogrames, with a float of 70 percent and tight finances, is also viewed as a possible target, though it has repeatedly stated its intention to remain independent. Its debt, furthermore, could act as a deterrent.

Ubi Soft has the financial means to stay independent but its future strategy hinges on achieving strong second-half sales via the launch of high potential games Splinter Cell and Rayman 3.

Franco-American media giant Vivendi Universal could be a wild card. Some analysts say it could make a move in Europe as a buyer.

But others say Vivendi is more likely to sell its games business to cut debt, even though the company has said its games unit is not for sale. Chairman Jean-Rene Fourtou has said he is open to a gradual spin-off of its U.S. entertainment assets.

Rose Bowl Gets a New Sponsor

Sony Playstation has replaced AT&T as the sponsor of the Rose Bowl.

Monday's announcement came nearly eight months after AT&T said it would not be renewing its contract, leaving the nation's oldest bowl without a major corporate backer.

Washington State will play Oklahoma at the Rose Bowl on New Year's Day.

The sponsors for the other major bowls are: Fiesta Bowl, Tostitos; Orange

Bowl, Federal Express; and Sugar Bowl, Nokia.

ABC Sports owns the right to choose the Rose Bowl sponsors. The Tournament
of Roses Association, which stages the game in Pasadena, does not
participate in sponsor negotiations but does have a final say in the
sponsorship.

Under the deal signed in 1998, ABC paid $19 million each year to the
Tournament of Roses to broadcast the 1999, 2000 and 2001 Rose Bowls and
$20.5 million to broadcast the 2002 game.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!
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                        Atari 2600 Game Reviews

By Dan Iacovelli

When I went CGE2k2 I managed to pick up two great 2600 home brew games
Space Treat and Warring Worms(I did a review on the ROM in the fest issue
but I'm going give a more in-depth review on it) Warring Worms is made by
Baroque Gaming and developed by Billy Eno. In this game you are a
bio-engineered worm and your object is to force your opponent (which also
another worm) to hit the segments of pain or part of playing field.

If you think this game sounds familiar, than your right. The game is
loosely based on the Surround game for the 2600. There are a few major
differences in this game though:

1.) you are equipped with cannons (which can be enabled or disabled) and
2.) There are 8 different play fields which range from open field to a maze.
Also you can (if your cannon is enabled) shoot at the parts of the worm to
make an opening for you to go through not to mention that you can shoot
at the other worm instead of having the opponent hit a part of the worm
segment or a play field.

Over all this is a very good game and the game play is fun to play and
still challenging to play. (there's one plus to this game I have to
mention, unlike the surround game this game does not have the sound effects
that surround has (you know the loud beeping sound that you hear when you
move your player) instead you hear a quiet beeping sound.
I give this game 3 and half stars.

Space Treat is developed by Fabrizo Zavagli and is made by Hozer Video
Games. The object of this game is to maneuver your space ship past the
enemies to collect the fruit that is in the cage. Then you maneuver ship
back to the launch pad while going past the enemies. The game scores by the
number of levels you pass (the first two are easy, the rest you need to get
a pass key to open the cage and from level 7 to 99 the enemies will change
their patterns).

The game play is game fun and challenging to play (it's more or less a
frogger type game) the graphics on this game are quite good too the same
goes for the sound effects. I give this game three stars

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                       A-ONE's Headline News
                 The Latest in Computer Technology News
                     Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

                    Sun Lures Sony from Microsoft

Sony has announced it will replace Microsoft Office with Sun Microsystems'
StarOffice suite on most of its desktop PCs sold in Europe.

The Japanese computer maker said the switch will affect PCs sold in the
United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Switzerland. Sun has
announced that discussions are under way to place the company's StarOffice
6.0 software on Sony PCs in other countries, too.

"I'm surprised that more PC manufacturers haven't done this," said Steve
Kleynhans, an analyst with Meta Group. Kleynhans told NewsFactor that
because of the cost factor, Microsoft alternatives like StarOffice are
attractive to PC makers.

Like Microsoft's Office package, Sun's StarOffice 6 is a suite of office
productivity software, bundling word processing, spreadsheet and other
applications typically needed for office work. The user interfaces of the
Sun and Microsoft programs are similar, allowing a user familiar with one
to switch to the other with relative ease.

Unlike Microsoft Office, StarOffice is an open source software product,
and it is considerably less expensive. The new version of StarOffice
retails for US$75.95. Microsoft Office sells for $479.

Additionally, the StarOffice program can be used on both Linux and Windows
systems. The package uses an XML (extensible markup language) file format,
allowing users to share or modify StarOffice content with commonly used
software tools.

While Microsoft has a dominant hold on the desktop PC software market,
Sony's decision to switch to StarOffice represents a significant victory
for Santa Clara, California-based Sun.

Indeed, the company has worked hard to erode Microsoft's market share. In
addition to including StarOffice with its server software, Sun has donated
millions of copies to schools.

"Since [the software is] not costing them a lot, Sun hopes to make it up
in the long run," Kleynhans said.

Analysts note that Sun has held discussions with ISPs to persuade them to
include StarOffice with their basic offerings. Additionally, StarOffice is

bundled with the offerings of many OS developers, including SuSE Linux, Ximian and Turbolinux.

Sun representatives were not immediately available for comment.

Sun has some powerful weapons in its efforts to gain more desktop customers. Chief among them is that the company has resolved file compatibility problems between StarOffice and Microsoft Office. In other words, if users want to transfer content between the two programs -- the most common example is Microsoft's .doc files -- the transfer should be problem-free.

An even bigger market factor benefiting Sun is falling PC prices, with some PCs flirting with a sub-$500 price tag. "The home market is extremely price sensitive, and manufacturers are doing anything they can to strip out costs," Kleynhans said. One of the few ways to squeeze extra profits from low prices is with software, he added, noting that StarOffice's low cost gives it a critical advantage.

Kleynhans speculated that Sun offered Sony the software at a price so low that it represents only a nominal profit for Sun. The reasoning behind that alleged strategy is that if Sun can gather a critical mass of home users, adoption in the more lucrative business market will follow.

The other competitor for desktop market share is Corel, which, like Sun, has only a small fraction of the office software market. Earlier this year, Corel scored a major coup by signing a deal to place its WordPerfect suite on PCs made by Gateway, Dell and Hewlett-Packard.

Analysts note that Europe is a particularly fertile market for alternative software products, largely because of European reluctance to embrace Microsoft. Yet, Corel is less well positioned than Sun to enter the European market, because it lacks the necessary alternative language versions of its office program.

Alternative Web Browsers: Revenge of the Lizard

The Microsoft Manual of Style advises readers to avoid using the word "navigate" to describe browsing Web pages; it instead suggests that writers use the word "explore." Little wonder, since Microsoft worked hard to erase Netscape Navigator's early lead over its own Internet Explorer Web browser.

Microsoft successfully conquered Netscape, but Navigator's open source offshoot, Mozilla, is overtaking Internet Explorer in terms of features, if not yet market share.

While Microsoft claims to be a champion of innovation, the Mozilla team has developed features that Explorer still does not have. Christopher Blizzard, one of the Mozilla developers, told NewsFactor that it is all about choice. "One thing that Mozilla does better than all the other browsers out there is that we understand that people want to use the Web in their own ways," he said.

Blizzard named Mozilla's ad-busting features as some of its most important ones. "The specific features that I'm talking about include the ability to choose when a site can set a cookie; the ability to block loading images from certain sites (think of dedicated ad servers); and the ability to

control on a per-site basis when Web sites can open pop-up windows," he explained.

In these days of rampant pop-ups, Blizzard said, users want control. "These features allow users to choose how they view the Web in their own unique ways, and I think [they] reflect user demand as the Web grows into a more aggressive ad medium."

Although Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer are both infamous for their browser-specific markup tags and spotty standards support, Mozilla toes the W3C line. The W3C is a Web standards organization that establishes guidelines for such markup languages as HTML and XML, among other tasks. "Mozilla also features the world's best CSS (cascading style sheet) support," Blizzard pointed out. "Support for other Web standards is also equally excellent, including support for all the various versions of HTML, XHTML and - XML."

Blizzard said pages designed to take advantage of Internet Explorer-specific features can cause problems for Mozilla, and he encouraged Web developers to shun proprietary tags. "We have support for a couple of non-standard tags and properties, but not many," he said. "However, it's quite possible to write Web pages that work in Mozilla and IE and [avoid] the use of proprietary tags and properties."

In addition to Mozilla's other features, the browser has one feature that Explorer is not likely to emulate. "Mozilla is open source software," Blizzard said. "While this might not seem important to end users, I think that it is."

He noted that Mozilla's open code invites corporate use. "For people who have more technical needs, like people who have to maintain large corporate intranets and custom applications, the fact that Mozilla is open source should be extremely compelling. They can change it in any way they want, make fixes that might need to be done, and deploy it in the way that they want."

Mitchell Baker, Mozilla's chief lizard wrangler, told NewsFactor that the software's open source nature also helps the browser development team avoid Internet Explorer's many security issues. "We've learned that openness makes our product better, and that includes security. We benefit enormously from community involvement in identifying possible security issues, in tracking the progress of those bugs, and in implementing fixes."

Baker added that although Mozilla has had a few security holes, for the most part "our community applies constant vigilance to avoid the level of unaddressed security problems that plague some products."

And the benefits of Mozilla extend beyond the program itself. Developers are taking advantage of its open source code. For example, a number of other browsers make use of the Gecko rendering engine that powers Mozilla, including Galeon, Chimera and Phoenix. AOL's Netscape also is based on Mozilla, and a beta version of AOL's upcoming Communicator e-mail client uses some of Mozilla's code.

Right now, Mozilla's market share is still negligible compared with that of Internet Explorer. However, Microsoft came from behind to take away Netscape's market share. There is no reason a reverse scenario could not occur. In fact, Blizzard said there are good reasons to switch.

"As users become more concerned about privacy and security and have to

question whether or not they want to trust a company like Microsoft with defending their privacy and security, they might come over to Mozilla," he said. "And Mozilla is only getting better as a product. Microsoft hasn't made significant improvements to IE in quite a while."

Alternative Web Browsers: Divide and Konquer

In the first installment of this two-part series, NewsFactor explored the features and functionality of alternative Web browser Mozilla. But Mozilla and its commercial twin Netscape are not the only challengers to Internet Explorer's throne.

Despite IE's dominance, a crop of alternative browsers has sprung up, providing as little or as much functionality as users need. Many of these browsers run on operating systems that Microsoft has refused to support with Internet Explorer.

One such browser, Opera, is often called "the fastest browser on Earth." It is also one of the few that still has a price tag. Speed and a small memory footprint are its dominant features, though Opera also pioneered tabbed browsing and mouse gestures, which have found their way into Mozilla and Konqueror, another IE alternative.

Jon S. von Tetzchner, CEO of Opera Software, which produces the program, told NewsFactor that "Opera is about giving power to the user.... We spend a lot of time listening to what users want, and that is what we strive to offer." He also noted that the Opera browser supports several operating systems, including Windows, Linux, OS/2, Solaris and Mac OS.

"Our cross-platform strategy is very important to us, as it sets Opera apart from its competitors," von Tetzchner said.

Another contender for browser market share is Konqueror, a part of the K Desktop Environment (KDE), a graphical user interface (GUI) that runs on Linux and Unix systems.

Konqueror, like Internet Explorer, is much more than just a Web browser. "Konqueror is very appreciated for its high level of integration into KDE, which means a consistent look and feel [and] a fast startup," David Faure of the KDE team told NewsFactor.

Simon Hausmann, another Konqueror developer, agreed that integration is vital. "I think it's ... the most important feature for the users out there," he told NewsFactor. "[For example], when saving a document to the disk, you get the standard file dialog and not something that behaves and looks totally different."

Faure added that Konqueror also leads the browser pack in terms of supported file types. "I think Konqueror is the browser that comes with the biggest number of viewer components," he said. "It can of course display HTML pages and directories, but also images, PostScript files, PDFs [and] text.... It can also embed components that play sound files [including MP3s] and videos."

One feature that is becoming increasingly important to users is security. In light of Internet Explorer's numerous vulnerabilities, the development teams working on Opera and Konqueror have made security a top priority.

"Security is a great focus for us and always has been," von Tetzchner said. "We tend to go for security when there is a choice between security and something else. We try to keep the security system easy to maintain and thus simple and powerful."

Faure added that "the focus on security these days is very high." In fact, the KDE team delayed its 3.1 release because of security concerns raised during a prerelease audit. The release was pushed back to January 2003.

Of course, Opera and Konqueror are only two of the many Web browsers entering the market. With a number of mature Web browsers to choose from, and more being developed all the time, Internet Explorer's dominance might not always be the sure thing it seems today.

Defense Rests in Russia Copyright Trial

An oversight by the U.S. company that sells software products for a Russian corporation charged with violating the controversial 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act may have undermined one of the prosecution's key allegations.

Testifying as the final witness before the defense rested its case in federal court Tuesday was Ryan Dewell, director of technical services for Register Now!, an Issaquah, Wash., re-seller for Moscow-based Elcomsoft Co. Ltd.

Dewell told a jury that general sales of a product allowing users to circumvent restrictions on Adobe Systems' eBook Reader were stopped almost immediately after the San Jose company complained to Elcomsoft.

However, because Elcomsoft's product, the Advanced eBook Processor Program, had a different product number for a price-discounted version to longtime Elcomsoft customers, the product was still offered until Elcomsoft notified Register Now! one version was still available.

Dewell said Elcomsoft President Alex Katalov requested that Register Now! remove the eBook software from sale within a five-day period demanded by Adobe, but the discounted version was overlooked and continued to be listed for several more days. During that period, at least one copy was purchased by Los Alamos National Laboratory, a long-time Elcomsoft customer.

"It was an oversight on our part," Dewell testified during questioning by defense attorney Joe Burton. "Katalov brought the second version to our attention."

Elcomsoft and Katalov, its president, are charged with willfully conspiring to sell software that is designed to circumvent technology protecting the rights of a copyright owner. Elcomsoft's product, marketed for just a few days in the summer of 2001, permitted users to remove publisher-imposed restrictions on their electronic books, allowing copying, printing and distribution.

Part of the government's case centers on whether Elcomsoft continued to sell its product after Adobe informed the company that it believed Elcomsoft was violating the DMCA and gave Elcomsoft five days to stop selling the software. Evidence introduced by the defense supported Elcomsoft's claim that it complied with Adobe's demand within the time

limit established.

Part of that evidence - two e-mails between Elcomsoft and Register Now! in which Katalov instructed the American re-seller to stop selling the Russian software - appeared to have caught prosecutor Scott H. Frewing off guard. He asked Dewell why neither of the e-mails had been turned over when FBI agents subpoenaed all Register Now! documents related to Elcomsoft.

For a second time, Dewell said it was "an oversight."

Earlier, Katalov testified that he didn't believe his company's product violated any Adobe copyright or the DMCA. Instead, Katalov testified, the software was intended for use by people who legally purchase electronic books.

The trial will be in recess Wednesday. Closing arguments are scheduled for Thursday.

Aussie Net Ruling Has Broad Implications

A landmark decision Tuesday by Australia's highest court extends the reach of that nation's libel laws well beyond its borders, creating a global precedent that could subject Internet publishers to lawsuits regardless of their geographical location.

The decision, involving an article posted in New Jersey by a Dow Jones & Co. magazine, could subject U.S.-based Web sites to stricter libel laws than those that apply domestically, where rulings are generally more favorable to publishers.

"This is the first time that a Supreme Court anywhere in the world ... really tries to look at how jurisdictional law maps onto the Internet," said Michael Geist, a University of Ottawa law professor who tracks Internet cases around the globe.

He expects several other countries - particularly Commonwealth nations including Canada and the United Kingdom - to apply the Australian ruling. But Geist and other legal experts doubted the decision would have a major impact on what news organizations will be willing to publish online.

"Their words are their product and if they export it internationally they know how to work the cost of litigation into the sale of their product," said Jonathan Zittrain, an Internet specialist at Harvard Law School.

Jerome Barron, a First Amendment professor at the George Washington University Law School, said news organizations have historically continued to publish outside their home countries even after being sued in other nations where their publications circulate.

But Lee Tien, an attorney with the Electronic Frontier Foundation who focuses on online speech, worries the ruling could silence smaller Internet publishers, including individuals who post on message boards and can't necessarily afford legal representation.

In Tuesday's ruling, the High Court of Australia unanimously dismissed an appeal by Dow Jones aimed at halting a defamation suit by mining magnate Joseph Gutnick.

Gutnick claimed a 7,000-word article that had appeared in Barron's in October 2000 portrayed him as a schemer given to stock scams, money laundering and fraud. The magazine article was also published online.

The decision means Gutnick can sue New York-based Dow Jones in his home state of Victoria, in Australia. The high court did address the merits of the libel case.

A coalition of 18 news and Internet organizations, including The Associated Press, The New York Times Co. and Amazon.com, joined Dow Jones in arguing that jurisdiction should be based on where a defendant last exercises control.

Lawyers for Dow Jones, which publishes The Wall Street Journal, Barron's, Dow Jones Newswires and several stock market indicators, said the case should be heard in the United States, where the article was first published and its Web servers are located.

Gutnick said the case should be heard in his hometown, Melbourne, since people in Victoria could see the article on the Internet and he was thus defamed where he is best known.

"It will certainly be re-established that the Net is no different than the regular newspaper," he told Australia's Channel Nine television. "You have to be careful what you write."

Dow Jones said in a statement that it was disappointed and now must defend itself "in a jurisdiction which is far removed from the country in which the article was prepared and where the vast bulk of Barron's readership resides."

Brigitte Trafford, a Dow Jones spokeswoman, said the ruling won't change the magazine's Internet offerings or the types of stories it pursues: "We have no intention of changing our high editorial standards."

David Tomlin, assistant to the president at The Associated Press, said the ruling "underlines the need for a thorough review of agreements and treaties or perhaps the construction of new ones that would govern tort law on the Internet."

The seven-judge court did impose some limits on defamation actions.

In its ruling, the court dismissed Dow Jones' concerns that many defamation actions could be brought as a result of one publication. It said that after any successful defamation action, subsequent legal action could be viewed as "vexatious" and therefore unlikely to succeed.

The court dismissed Dow Jones' contention that it would have to consider the defamation laws from "Afghanistan to Zimbabwe" in every article published on the Internet.

"In all except the most unusual of cases, identifying the person about whom material is to be published will readily identify the defamation law to which that person may resort," the court said.

But the court acknowledged that the results it crafted "are still less than wholly satisfactory. They appear to warrant national legislative attention and to require international discussion in a forum as global as the Internet itself."

Zittrain said technology may ultimately be required to avoid lawsuits elsewhere. Developers are now refining software that could let sites identify where visitors come from and block them if they come from jurisdictions deemed hostile.

But he said the Internet will be disappointing when "many speakers will start limiting the reach of what they say to their own turf to avoid lawsuits."

Internet Watchdog Warns of Fake eBay Web Site

Fraudsters trying to steal credit card information from online auction house eBay Inc.'s 55 million users appear to have set up a fake Web site that mimicked the firm, a private Internet watchdog said on Wednesday.

The scam involved e-mails that asked recipients to log on to a Florida-based Web site, ebayupdates.com, and re-enter financial data for eBay, said Dean White, the Asia-Pacific coordinator of a U.S. group, SANS Institute Internet Storm Center.

"Once you've got the credit card information you can use it for everything," White said.

The scam site sported the eBay logo and colors but did not appear to have any connection with California-based eBay, White told Reuters.

Representatives of eBay in Australia were not immediately available for comment, but the company has issued a general warning on its Web site, urging caution over e-mails seeking passwords or credit card numbers.

"Some members have reported attempts to gain access to their personal information through e-mail solicitations that are falsely made to appear as having come from eBay," the company said.

"These solicitations will often contain links to Web pages that will request that you sign in and submit information...eBay employees will never ask you for your password."

The scam e-mail, provided to Reuters by White, is headed "Ebay (sic) billing error" and begins: "Dear Ebay Member, We at Ebay are sorry to inform you that we are having problems with the billing information of your account."

White said the mail, aimed at eBay's registered customers but possibly mass-mailed to other Internet users, began appearing on December 6.

The company hosting the fake Web site on its computers had been informed and by Wednesday the site was unavailable on the Internet.

Security and trust are major issues for e-commerce and Australian banking officials have warned consumers to be especially vigilant about Internet fraud and identity theft over the big spending Christmas period.

Web Filters Block Some Health Sites, Study Says

Teens searching the Internet for information about birth control, drug abuse and other health topics may often be stymied by government-mandated filters in schools and libraries, according to a study released on Tuesday.

Filters that screen out pornography and other objectionable material rarely block Web sites containing information about alcohol abuse, breast cancer, depression or sexually transmitted diseases, the nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation reported.

But at more restrictive screening levels used by many schools, the filters were much more likely to block information about homosexuality, condoms, and safe-sex practices, the study found. At the most restrictive settings, more than half of all Web sites on such topics -- including government sites -- were blocked.

Content filters made by companies such as N2H2 Inc. and Websense Inc allow parents, librarians or school authorities to block Web browsers from viewing objectionable content. Users can choose to block only pornography, or can screen out other categories such as nudity, violence, dating and swimsuits.

An N2H2 spokesman said the report was proof that filters worked as advertised, and report author Caroline Richardson agreed that when set only to block pornography, filters could easily differentiate between pornography and health sites.

But they were less discriminating when set to screen out other categories, she said.

Some saw this as a troubling sign for teens who turn to the Internet to find out about topics they may not be comfortable discussing in public.

"This means that the teenage girl who goes online looking for information about emergency contraception might not get it in time to prevent a pregnancy," said Michael McGhee, vice president of education for Planned Parenthood of America.

Congress required all schools and libraries that receive federal technology funds to filter their Internet connections two years ago, but a federal court struck down the portion of the law that applied to libraries this spring. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the case next year.

The report won praise for its thoroughness -- it tested eight different filtering services against more than 3,500 Web sites -- but seemed unlikely to resolve a debate about the controversial filters that has raged for years.

Anti-porn activist Donna Rice Hughes said filters were necessary to keep children from the explicit sexual material so easily available online.

"You can't tell young kids that gurls.com is a great site for kids, but girls.com is a porn site," Hughes said. With filters, "a parent can tailor a tool for a 7-year-old."

Emily Sheketoff of the American Library Association said that the filters only blocked nine out of 10 pornography sites, according to the report.

"That's a worse effectiveness rate than most condoms," she said.

Workplace Seen Escaping 'Spam' Deluge

Despite a rising tide of get-rich-quick scams and herbal Viagra offers on people's home computers, American workers say they receive relatively little unwanted "spam" e-mail at work, according to a report released Sunday.

Half of those surveyed by the nonprofit Pew Internet and American Life Project said e-mail was essential to their jobs, saving them time, improving teamwork and helping them to communicate with more people.

Few complained about the unwanted junk e-mail that has tripled in volume over the past year.

The average American will get more than 2,200 spam messages this year and 3,600 by 2007, according to Jupiter Research, a technology consulting firm.

But while spam is a problem for Internet users' personal e-mail accounts, it is not slowing them down at work, the nonprofit Pew Foundation found.

More than half of the 1,003 Internet users surveyed said they received no spam at work. Another 19 percent reported that fewer than 1 in 10 messages were spam.

The report's author said she was surprised with its findings.

"We began this survey expecting to find the beginning of a backlash against e-mail -- not just spam, but also against the rising volume of all kinds of e-mail," said Senior Research Fellow Deborah Fallows.

"Instead, we found that most American workers are pleased with the role e-mail plays in their job, and we found almost zero evidence of disillusionment."

Spam was more likely to turn up in personal inboxes, with nearly one in three respondents saying that two-thirds of all e-mail they received was unwanted commercial pitches.

Businesses are more likely to take measures to block spam, the report said, while large services such as America Online and Yahoo that cater to individuals are more likely to make their names available through marketing efforts and other features.

Spammers also use random name-generating software targeted at large services, the report said.

More than 57 million Americans, 60 percent of the work force, use e-mail on the job, the report found, twice the number that used it two years ago.

They typically spend half an hour using e-mail, the survey found, and receive 10 or fewer messages and send five or fewer on an average day.

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Leave the Tin Cup at Home and Try 'Cyberbegging'

Need to pay down credit card debt? Desperate for money for music lessons? Simply tired of working and too embarrassed to stand on the corner with a tin cup? Try "cyberbegging."

For some, the clicks in their cyberpails are starting to add up. Karyn Bosnak, for example, paid off $20,000 in credit card debt -- accumulated from her life in New York -- last month, after Web strangers contributed more than $13,000 to her cause, according to her Web site (http://www.savekaryn.com).

Now that she has paid off her debt, Bosnak is passing the buck, and directing Web surfers to other cyberbeggars such as an aspiring opera singer trying to pay for voice lessons and college loans (http://www.saveelaine.com). Along the way, Bosnak has parlayed her new-found fame into talk show appearances and a reported book deal.

Yahoo started a "begging" category with four sites in 1996. But the recent spike in activity and diversity of sites, last month led Yahoo to rename the category e-panhandling, said Michelle Heimburger, senior lead surfer for Yahoo.

There are now 51 sites in the category, ranging from some shamelessly looking for cash to others seeking financial assistance for loans or medical treatments, Heimburger said.

Rich Schmidt, a freelance music marketer, who was one of the first cyberbeggars, wants little more than an appearance on the "Late Show with David Letterman" ... and, of course, cash.

"To me, the Internet is creative anarchy. I just wanted to make my mark. I thought, what if 1 percent of the Web surfers out there sent me a dollar," Schmidt said. "That was the impetus for the idea."

His site (http://sendeadollar.com) has raised more than $4,800 since it was set up about three years ago. Schmidt reviews other cyberbeggars on his site and allows people to post a short message or ad for a donation.

When Schmidt first started, he asked Web surfers to send him a dollar in the mail, but he soon switched over to PayPal, an electronic payment service which makes it easy to collect money on the Internet.

"I get a lot of e-mail from people who really have hardships and are asking for advice. If they think they are going to get rich doing it, they aren't," Schmidt said. "My goal was to be a guest on the David Letterman show, having gotten hundreds of thousands of dollars. Who knows? I may still get there."

In the short-term, though, Schmidt said he is going to start selling banner ads on his site to help finance a new mini-van for his family.

Other Web sites in the category include the Internet Squeegee Guy (http://www.Web Site1.com/squeegee/), who "will wash the inside of your monitor screen for spare change."

Penny Hawkins hopes to get enough money to finish nursing school so she can divorce her husband, she says. So far, she has received more than $1,500 through her Web site, http://www.helpmeleavemyhusband.com.

Along with e-mailed donations, she said she got a healthy dose of feedback.

"As far as the crazier responses, I would have to say that they are usually dedicated to the religious fanatics that want to save me and/or my marriage," Hawkins said.

A compelling site (http://www.helpleahgetpregnant.com) was started by a young Seattle couple seeking emotional and financial support as they tried to start a family and pay off an in-vitro fertilization bill of more than $12,000.

But Princess Natalie of Westwood, Ohio, may not elicit much compassion.

On her Web site (http://egomania.nu/causes/indexsoc.html) she says people should donate money because imagining a world where "someone as talented as me was forced to work" would be a scary thought and "it could ruin her manicure."

Still, according to the site, she has collected $1,473, a toe ring, a phone card, books, and some death threats.

Ed from Dallas is looking to buy a Hummer with Web donations (http://www.terravirtua.com/hummer/index.html).

So, why exactly would anyone want to donate their own hard-earned money to a cyberbeggar?

"I think when people come to the site they think, 'I wish I'd thought of it' and, in the spirit of that, people give a dollar," Schmidt said.

With the success of the e-panhandling sites comes the inevitable backlash of parodies, including "Don't Save Karyn" (http://www.dontsavekaryn.com/). The site's creators, Bob and Ben, say they too are e-panhandlers, and are not pretending to be anything else. If anyone has an extra dollar, they promise "to waste your money in inventive and creative ways" rather than "use it to pay any bills or help starving children in Africa."

Web Ad Group Backs Bigger Banner Ad Sizes

An interactive advertising industry trade group on Wednesday endorsed a new set of ad sizes that are larger than standard Web banners.

The Interactive Advertising Bureau, with members like Microsoft Corp's MSN, AOL Time Warner Inc's AOL and Yahoo Inc. on Wednesday also backed a "Universal Ad Package," with the new large ad size as well as three sizes the group had previously recommended, to make web advertising simpler and more cost-effective.

IAB in a press release said the new ad package was created in response to advertiser demand for simpler, more efficient units. It said it will now solicit industry feedback on the Universal Ad Package.

It said its members have agreed to offer the new unit and package to advertisers.

Napster Goods Go on Auction Block

Computers, laptops and a slew of T-shirts with a grinning cartoon cat logo will go up for auction as the now defunct song-swap company Napster cleans out its remaining physical assets.

The smattering of tech goodies represents all that's left of the company dreamed up by a few college students, primarily Shawn Fanning. The company crashed and burned, but gave birth to an online song-swap revolution.

Santa Clara-based software maker Roxio bought the brand name and intellectual property after Napster's bankruptcy. The leftover computer parts, laptops and Napster-logo trinkets are up for grabs at Wednesday's auction.

Available for purchase on the cheap are pallets of monitors and servers that were once used as the company amassed tens of millions of users looking to trade music for free online.

A federal judge ordered Napster offline last year until it could comply with an order to halt the unauthorized trade of copyright music. Napster never met that legal challenge and has remained offline ever since.

Napster filed for bankruptcy earlier this year, and Roxio says it may launch some form of renewed service under the brand name in the near future.

Since Napster fell off the map, other free online music trading services have taken its place, including Kazaa and Gnutella networks. The music industry has tried to counter with its subscription services, pressplay and MusicNet, but they've failed to attract anywhere near the audience the free services have.

Analysts say the subscription services have fewer than 500,000 users combined, whereas Kazaa has about 3.5 million users online at any given time.

Microsoft Goes After Windows Domain

A Dutch computer enthusiast who runs a popular Windows XP gossip Web site has been summoned by Microsoft to hand over the WindowsXP.nu domain name.

Steven Bink registered WindowsXP.nu two years ago. The site has become an important spot for Microsoft beta testers and hobbyists looking for news and gossip about Microsoft products, logging up to 20,000 page views a day, said Bink.

On Monday, Bink received a letter from Microsoft's Dutch counsel accusing him of trademark infringement and giving him until December 19 to sign over the domain, or face possible legal action. Microsoft has registered Windows as a trademark in the Netherlands and other countries.

"He [Bink] may of course write about Windows XP, but not on a Web site with a domain name that is identical to Microsoft's brand," said Alfred Meijboom, a partner at Kennedy Van der Laan, the law firm hired by

Microsoft.

Bink, a 32-year-old owner of an IT services company, is baffled that
Microsoft has come knocking two years after he started the site, but said
he won't fight the Redmond, Washington, software maker.

"It's strange that Microsoft comes calling now with the fact that Windows
is their brand. I want to see if there is room to negotiate, but I don't
have any illusions about going to court," he said.

Microsoft seems to be cracking down on trademark infringement. The company
has also asked several small European software makers to rename products
that had Windows in the name. The makers of "Windows Spy" and "Windows
Backup Wizard," for example, received letters from Microsoft lawyers.

In the U.S., Microsoft filed suit against Lindows.com of San Diego in
December last year. Two rulings denied Microsoft's requests to bar Lindows
from using its company name and the name LindowsOS. The case is currently
awaiting a judge's ruling in a U.S. District Court in Seattle, according
to the Lindows Web site.

Meijboom denied Microsoft has launched a campaign against trademark
infringers, saying that the law firm is not sending around letters or
subpoenas for Microsoft. "There is no offensive from the side of
Microsoft," he said.

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